

VZCZCXRO8116  
RR RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHSK #0264/01 0731335  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 141335Z MAR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY MINSK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3964  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 0940  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MINSK 000264

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/07/16

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [BO](#)

SUBJECT: Kozulin Continues With Campaign, More Violence  
Feared

REF: Minsk 223

Classified by Ambassador George Krol for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Campaign managers for presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin, Aleksei Korol and Oleg Volchek met with Poloffs on March 6 following Kozulin's March 2 beating at the hands of security forces. Although charged with hooliganism, Kozulin has continued with his campaign and his managers doubt the GOB will disqualify him as a candidate. Volchek presented more information regarding the shooting of a car belonging to Kozulin supporters and the increased usage of elite anti-terrorist units to suppress demonstrations ahead of the elections. Volchek and Korol noted Lukashenko's anger at (and fear of) the opposition candidates and the subsequent increase in violence as elections approach. The campaign managers appreciated U.S. support, but asked for the U.S. to exert more pressure on the regime. End summary.

Kozulin Continues to Campaign After Beating  
-----

¶2. (C) Presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin continues to campaign after being beaten by security forces on March 2 and then charged with hooliganism (ref A). If convicted of the charge, Kozulin could be disqualified as a candidate, but his campaign managers Oleg Volchek and Alexei Korol doubt this will happen, as the GOB would like to split the "democratic vote." Kozulin briefly traveled to Belarusian regional cities on March 4 and spoke to 500 people in Lida, 1,000 people in Grodno, and 500 in Smorgon. Local authorities, however, continue to harass local campaign activists with the usual detentions and confiscations of campaign materials.

¶3. (C) According to Volchek, Kozulin's recent beating and television appearances boosted his popularity ratings. Korol admitted that the manner and tone of Kozulin's televised speeches resembled those of Lukashenko's in the early 1990s, but Belarusians respond well to it. Although comments about Lukashenko's prison guard experience and his sons' scandals were edited from Kozulin's second TV appearance, it was enough to spark a sharp rebuttal from Lukashenko during the Third All Belarusian People's Assembly. Korol laughed at the President's accusation that Kozulin contacted him to negotiate a deal, claiming that no one but Lukashenko's son Viktor and head of the Presidential Administration Gennady Neviglass were able to contact the President.

¶4. (C) Kozulin recently left for a three-day trip to Ukraine, Germany, and Russia. Volchek and Korol hesitated to comment on the goals or reasons for the trip, nor would

they comment on the March 4 seizure of 250,000 copies of independent newspaper Narodnaya Volya's print run of an issue about Kozulin's beating and campaign.

#### Military Units Involved in Beating and Shooting

-----

15. (C) Volchek, an Afghan War veteran and former security service agent, explained that most of the security forces involved in Kozulin's March 2 beating and the shooting (reftel) were most likely members of ALMAZ and other elite military units. Volchek's colleagues in the BKGB strongly denied being involved in either incident, although BKGB Chief Stepan Sukharenko was present during Kozulin's beating and later opined to journalists that Kozulin deserved it.

16. (C) Volchek said ALMAZ was a highly trained and secretive anti-terrorist unit controlled by Interior

#### SIPDIS

Minister Vladimir Naimov. Calling the ALMAZ and security service personnel "robots" that fulfill orders without thinking or emotion, Volchek noted the calm faces of the security services as they beat Kozulin, his supporters, and journalists and their professionalism in quickly, but brutally, rounding up and detaining journalists. According to Volchek, an ALMAZ unit lead by Ignatovich (no first name or rank given) was directly involved in the 2000 disappearance of Russian journalist Dmitry Zavadsky.

#### The Trigger Man in the Shooting

-----

17. (C) Volchek identified Nikolai Karpenkov, commander of the elite anti-terrorist unit ALMAZ, as the man who shot a

MINSK 00000264 002 OF 003

car belonging to a Kozulin supporter on March 2. According to Volchek, Kozulin supporter Yuri Radzivil was in his Audi waiting for his female colleagues who were photographing security services beating journalists outside the October police station. When Radzivil saw security agents confiscating cameras, he and his colleagues tried to leave. Security agents unsuccessfully tried to open the doors of the moving car before Karpenkov shot the windshield and tire. [Note: A photo of the shooting can be found on human rights NGO Charter 97's website [www.charter97.org](http://www.charter97.org). According to Volchek, a BKGB agent shot the photograph and, disgusted with the authorities' behavior, leaked it to the press.]

#### More Violence in the Near Future

-----

18. (C) According to Korol, President Lukashenko is extremely angry with Kozulin and 10+ Coalition candidate Aleksandr Milinkevich for openly criticizing him on their first television addresses and tarnishing his "iconic" image among the people. The use of violence, according to Korol and Volchek, was Lukashenko's attempt to regain his reputation. Volchek told Poloffs that Belarus had arrived at a dangerous moment, because Lukashenko was frantic, and like most dictators, would use all necessary means to maintain his rule.

19. (C) Volchek fears the elite military units would use their "sadistic" behavior to quell opposition demonstrations as the elections draw closer. The General Prosecutor Office's refusal to charge the units for beating Kozulin and reporters was the unofficial green light to use even more violence. Colonel Dmitry Pavlechenko, alleged triggerman in the disappearances of opposition leaders in 1999 and 2000, has been designated leader of security services in charge of maintaining public order.

110. (C) Volchek's BKGB sources report that the GOB plans to

cordon off Minsk from the rest of the country on Election Day to prevent opposition supporters from gathering in Minsk. Volchek also believes that the BKGB could possibly detonate a bomb during a demonstration, just as BKGB Chief Sukharenko predicted on March 1 (septel), to depict the opposition as terrorists.

#### After Elections

¶11. (C) Volchek fears that once elections are over and Lukashenko has his victory, the authorities will increase its pressure on the opposition and "neutralize" its leaders. By this, Volchek meant arrests and prison sentences, but did not rule out possible disappearances and murders.

¶12. (C) According to Volchek's sources, Lukashenko plans to retire former head of the Presidential Administration and current campaign manager Viktor Sheyman and replace him with his son Viktor after the elections. [Note: Volchek claims the President has already relieved Sheyman of his GOB vehicle and bodyguards.] Other rumors indicate that Lukashenko will reassign Naumov and Prime Minister Sergei Sidorsky to obscure, low-level positions.

#### U.S. Help

¶13. (C) Volchek and Korol asked if the U.S. could increase pressure on the GOB and Russia and issue more statements condemning the electoral process. Poloffs reminded the campaign managers that visiting EUR DAS David Kramer on February 23-24 warned GOB officials at the MFA and Central Election Committee that the U.S. and EU would condemn Belarus' elections should they be fraudulent and marred with violence. Poloffs also noted Kramer's March 3 statement condemning Kozulin's beating.

#### Comment

¶14. (C) Volchek and Korol were happy that Kozulin's criticism, and to some extent his beating, had improved his image among the population, but neither one has hopes that Kozulin will win the election. Volchek's prediction of more violence in the immediate future is not comforting, as Volchek has previously made predictions to Emboffs that later play themselves out. Both men were right that Lukashenko is panicking, which has been obvious in his

MINSK 00000264 003 OF 003

latest interviews and speeches.

KROL